CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

The Memba are one of the minor tribes of Bodic group of Arunachal Pradesh. They inhabit in Menchuka Circle of West Siang district of the state. The Memba are peace loving and peoples friendly in nature. The glimpse of their ancestor heritage is found in the form of Buddhist arts and craft, traditional socio-cultural, economic and political institution. The study reveals their Socio-cultural contact with the Neighboring Tibet and other tribes of the Arunachal Pradesh. It provides information of the third vessels known as Vajrayana sect of Buddhism in Arunachal Pradesh.

The origin of the Memba is unknown not only to themselves but also to their neighboring areas and people. The Tibetans and the Westerners did not know by its present name but by the name of Pachakshiri. The people of present day Menchuka called themselves Neh-nang from Baechakshiri. The Memba were known as Nyem and their place was called Nyem-Nyoku by their neighboring tribes of the Tani ethnic (Nyishi, Adi, Galo, Apatani and Tagin tribes) group. The term Memba was originally first used for identifying the Buddhist people living in the Tuting circle of Upper Siang district in Arunachal Pradesh. Later, the British colonial government to recognize the Buddhist people from the Pemako area and to recognise the people of Menchuka and Tuting area recorded the name Memba. Although culturally and linguistically both are very different. They were known as Jira Memba in order to differentiate them from the Memba of Tuting, known as Sarchuk Memba by Khamba people.
The origin of the Memba and their migration to Menchuka valley is surrounded with legends and myth related to Nin-ma-pa tradition of the myth of hidden treasure. The historical evidence of migration of the Memba is scattered and difficult to interpret. However, the migration and their settlement in Menchuka valley is also very fragmented and incomplete. What little known is also based on the oral tradition of migration recorded by different scholars after the independence (1947). However, there are no authentic written record of their migration process, the study initially based on folktales, folklores and narration available among the community. It has been preserved for generations orally.

The most detailed and the most important account of their early history is found in a manuscript called Cheik, which is a written record, kept in the Menchuka old monastery. There is another manuscript called Neik, speaks of the existence of hidden holy places in Menchuka valley. The legendary narration, come across of a place called Samey in Tibet, where an ape like man lived named Pha-Zamju Sambo and a woman named Mada Simbo. The women who gave birth to thousands of children in a day but were unable to cultivate crops due to lack of knowledge and technique and as a result were unable to take care of their children. The children had to survive on the wild maize, which was abundant in nature. Because they ate to survive, it is said to have had an adverse effect on the physical appearance and was visible on their bodies. Wherein the hair on their bodies grew shorter and shorter until they finally disappeared. The oral narration above indicates that they were hunters and food gatherers. In due course of time, like other civilizations, Memba also developed agriculture and permanent villages. They recognised their king primarily as a leader in war, responsible for the defense of the community. However, the king was in no sense regarded as a religious head or a divine person unlike the
Dalai Lama who has been the spiritual head of Tibet. The religion followed by them during this period was identified as Bon (animistic) because their oral narration, mentions of a Buddhist Lama who came to their place and began to guide them. It inaugurated the process of conversion among them to Buddhism.

There is a popular belief among the Memba people that earlier the Tani group, which includes Nyishi, Adi, Galo, Tagin and Apatani tribes lived together with Memba in Tibet. During the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, both the Tani and Memba were brought to a Samey monastery under the guidance of Guru Padmasambhava. Both were given the sermon and the teachings of the guru in a written record in the form of animal skin to Tani and a stone slab or tablet to Memba. It is significant to note that Tani was not interested in the teachings of the Guru and ran away from Samey with all their belongings including the written record of the teachings of the Guru in animal skin. The same animal skin was later eaten by Tani because to hunger. Hence the reason, why the Tani ethnic group migrated from Tibet and settled down in Arunachal Pradesh, earlier than Memba, who had stayed back in the monastery and adopted Buddhism as their religion.

The inhabitants residing in Menchuka are the people who have migrated from Tibet, Bhutan and Tawang. There are many myths and legends surrounding their process of migration to Menchuka. It is also found in narration of Lama's and told as folk tells. However, the Ramo (sub-tribes of Adi) who is an immediate neighboring tribe of the Memba also testifies about the migration of Memba. It is believed that there was once a person named Uyu Gamme of the Tagin tribe who could fly and played an important role in the migration process according to oral narration.
However, studies suggest dissimilarities in the type of narration but the baseline story of the migration remains the same.

The language spoken by Memba comes under Sino-Tibetan Linguistics group comprising of two linguistics stocks called Sinitic and Tibeto-Burman. The language developed and grew due to the crystallisation of the relationship between the Chinese and Tibetan on one hand and Tibetan and Burmese on the other hand. The Memba tribe languages are one of the definitely endangered languages in a list of UNESCO (United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) interactive atlas of the world’s language in danger. Besides their own language, they also speak and understand Tibetan. It is recognised as the official language for understanding religious texts, administrative function and also for the purpose of trade in Tibet. Some of the people of Menchuka also speak and understand the language of Ramo, Boris, Bokars, Pailibaos and Tagins.

Traditional attire worn by Memba is not very different from that of the Tibetans. The finest quality garment of the male is known as Chub-gyam and the females dress is called Po-Gushi or Tiba-Gushi. It is worn mostly on special occasions and ceremonies. Since it is quite cold in Menchuka throughout the year, it is essentially important that they wear hats made of finest fur and wool to keep themselves warm. Therefore, both the sexes wear long coats with sleeves like a caftan. The men's hat is called Tsering King-ghap and that of a woman is called chum or Gugi. It is decorated with a blue stone called Yuh and a red stone known as Zur. The Memba men also carry attractive coloured bags made of animal skin known as fess bogu adorned with shell, a small bell and the tail of a yak, which is usually worn on the left side to carry important and edibles things during their journey. The
women always use a comb made of wood or bamboo called *Tsed* or *Jugshe*. They wear ornaments of various precious and semi-precious, i.e., Thanga (beads), Yu (earrings), Nga (necklaces), *Cindu* (finger-ring), *Lando* (bangles) and amulets made of gold, silver, turquoise and coral. The ornaments are regarded as a symbol of assets and social status. The ornaments were commonly known by the name Thanga. The most valued ornaments of the Memba are *Gzi* (*Dzi*) and used by wealthy Memba. It is believed that these stones are of medicinal value and that can cure strokes. It is historically significance not only for Memba but also in Tibet.

The villages preferably called *Dongba* is located in and around Menchuka valley, earlier known as Baechakshiri. Before it came under the Indian administration the number of villages were four viz., Lha-Lhung, Deching-tang, Menchuka and Galling. The people of Menchuka built their houses in the slightly sloping part of the village. The plain area of the village land is used for agriculture and cattle rearing. Before the construction of any new house, approval of the village deity is essential. It is taken by the advice of the lama and for which, the horoscope of the person was required in the selection of the site. After the completion of the house, a grand feast is organized for the celebration and all the people of the village are invited to the party. The Memba emphasize on the importance of the *tsembe* form, which means clan, without which they consider individual as nobody. The clans comprising the Memba tribe are Chukla, Sona, Dabo, Dale-Gumbu, Sarjo, Kigar, Goiba, Maney, Dorsom, Gyana, Buru, hegong, Gellong, Pilley, Onge, Ongb, Nyajung, Lam-Sang, Norbu-Chombey, Chena, Goum, Naksang and Lobin. The Chegong and Gellong Clan consider themselves as brothers and sisters whereas no other clans claim to be related to the other.
Like in the mainland society where there is a caste division viz. *Brahmana*, *Kshtriya*, *Vaishya* and *Sudras*, the Memba society is divided into two class, the master and the slave. The slaves comprise of the group of people who are not from the Memba clan and had been captured or purchased from neighboring tribal area in the past. These slaves are treated as property. Based on labour, the people of Menchuka are classified into three groups, *Lama*, *Bureaucrat* and *commoners*. However, there is no monopoly of a particular clan in a particular profession. Memba follow the patriarchal system, wherein the head of the family is always a male or the descendent through the male line.

The marriage ceremony in the Memba society is considered as sacred and requires a very complicated religious ceremony and preparation. The provision of parallel and cross cousin marriage is permissible in the Memba society. However, the marriages outside the tribe is not in practice during the olden days as the Buddhist people considered themselves as superior than their neighboring tribes like Ramo, Pailibo, Tagin, Bori and Boker. The marriage between their Tibetan counterparts is acceptable, probably due to the same religious beliefs. They practice *Lo-Kham* or *Kega*, which is an important part for the ceremony, where astrological match is required for the selection of the best pair. They practice marriages in seven forms namely, arranged marriage, eloping, forced marriage, marriage by service, love marriage, marriage by exchange and widow remarriage. It is important to note that the practice of forced marriage is not followed. The Memba society where marriage system is considered sacred and regarded a permanent bond and there was no place for divorce among them.
Every male child in the Memba family, who is interested in learning and becoming a Lama is allowed to study it, at the age of seven onwards. However, the child has to stay with the lama until the completion of his studies during which the student has to do all the household work of his master. The main subject for study has always been the Kanjur and Tanjur, which was a religious text of Tibetan Buddhism.

The study reveals that most of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh do not have a script of their own, their history is recorded orally through folk stories and folk songs, the Memba have a script though mostly concentrated with religious work. It is not written in their own language but they use a Tibetan script called Ume. The Gterma is a Tibetan heterogeneous literature which appeared around 11th century. Neik is also another important literally work of the Memba, which is believed to be a record of the sayings of Guru Padmasambhav to his wife about Baechakshiri. The Chinese official took away the cheik and Neik and never returned. Now the Cheik and Neik, available in the Monastery (Gomp) is a duplicate copy written by Lamas through memory of the original ones.

After the death of a person, burial takes place in one of the three ways as followed by burial, cremation and water burial. The Memba claim that before the migration to Menchuka they followed the burial practice of their Tibetan counterpart. They abandoned the vulture disposal practice, where they cut the body parts of the dead person into several parts, scattered out in the open, where scavenger birds come and consumed the body. The burial practice has a lot of religious ceremonies and taboos. It is the Lama, who decides how a person should be buried and rites have to be followed.
The woman in the Memba society is considered inferior in status to their male counterparts of the patriarchal system. They enjoy a respectable place in terms of freedom in various social set up and activity. The women have no right to the inheritance. There are certain exceptional cases where there is only a single girl child and in the case of a widow and if the son is minor then the mother has right over to all the immovable property until the child becomes an adult.

The most popular festival of the Memba is the festival of Losar, considered as the New Year. They celebrate Losar in the Tibetan month of Dawa-Chung-Nyib (Dec-Jan). Unlike the Monpa's of Tawang who celebrate Losar festival in the Tibetan month of Dawa-Dangbu (Jan-Feb.). Memba also observe a festival called Bham-Mesh in the month of Dawa-Ngabu (May-June) and also many other festivals namely Torgya ceremony on the month of Dawa-Chuk-Chib (Nov.-Dec.), celebrated to ensure the welfare of the village and the deceased people. Their festival is filled with singing and dancing. The folk dances of the Memba is called as Broh Dance. All the songs signify and depict a picture of praise for the nature and thankfulness to the Gods for all abundant food and blessings. The songs are classified into three groups called Sha-ye, Chang-Lhu and Dong-Sh. Sha-ye is sung on special occasions like marriage, construction of house. The Chang-Lho is a song, which is sung by anybody, even children. The Dong-sh is another type, which is sung on special occasions just like the Sha-ey song.

Although many practices and taboos have been removed elsewhere, there are no more restrictions and taboos in the society. It has grown and blossomed with time and adjusted itself according to the present day society, which enables them to live in harmony.
Till 1951 A.D., politically Menchuka area was a private estate of the Tibetan aristocratic family called Lhalu. The Lhalu family was considered to be one of the most powerful and respected aristocratic families and comes under Yabshi group of family in Tibet. The Lhalu family was the only family, which has produced two reincarnated Dalai Lamas and numerous reincarnated soul boys for Tibet. The Sonam Dargye, father of the 8th Dalai Lama was conferred dukedom by the central government and provided with estate by central government of Tibet. The family residence lies about one Kilometer north of Potala palace in Lasha. The family continued their activity until 1832 A.D. and could not continue after being unable to produce male heirs. It seems that the Tibetan central government was exhausted by allotting estates to the families of frequently changing Dalai Lamas and they did not have enough financial resources any more to support a new Yabshi family. As a result, the family of the 12th Dalai Lama was moved into the remains of the Lhalu family. Thus, it is assumed that the Menchuka (Baechakshiri) was the private estate of 12th Dalai Lama family till it is corporate into British India territory. From the above discussion it is can be assumed that, the Memba people politically remained under Tibet. Unlike most of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Memba had well organized political system based on Tibetan system as well as local system.

It was significant to note that the area of Menchuka was largely recognised as the part of British India in 1914 A.D., when the British official and Tibetan representative in the absence of Chinese representative signed the Simla Accord. Henry Mc Mahon prepared the demarcation of the boundary and the line came to be known as McMahon line thereafter.
The McMahon line was forgotten for quite some time. It came into limelight after the British exploring team highlighted the actual McMahon line to the British Indian Government. It was in 1951, the Indian Government in order to recognise the north-western part of West Siang and Upper Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh, established its administrative centre. The Menchuka centre was set up in 1951 and U. Hipson Roy became the first Assistant Political officer of the centre. The study observe that the Memba people considered themself remained politically under Tibet.

The Memba had well organised political system based on the Tibetan system and their own. They had their administrative system where the Deb played an important role. The higher authority from Tibet appointed the Menchuka Deb. The Menchuka Deb had the power to function and to maintain law and order on behalf of the Gaza Deb and the Lhalu family. The Deb also played an active role as a revenue collector, which was an important aspect for the Lhalu family. The family was depended on the revenue collected from the people for their existence. The appointment of the Deb was followed with huge celebration, where everyone was the part of it. The Deb had the power to elect Chims, which was the village head directly appointed by the Deb. Usually an elderly person was elected as a Chim after a thorough investigation. An elderly person well respected in the society was elected as a Chim. The duty and the role of the Chims were similar to the role of the Gaon Burrahs of Arunachal Pradesh.

The administrative system of the Memba was based on the Law of state and the customary law based on local system. Buddhism being their religion, it had a great influence in the legal system of the Memba. Interestingly Memba had no
written laws. They had their traditional principles, customs and practices of the Tibet. They brought this system with them during their migration to Menchuka. The state law considered the cases related to the revenue, which was important for the maintenance of the Lhalu family, it also dealt with serious crimes like murder, treason and arson. The customary law practiced in order to save oneself from the humiliation and to keep the matter in the hands of its own people. It dealt the cases within the community. This law is in practice even today.

The most basic nature of any tribal economy is its subsistence type of nature. It is a need based economy. The economic activities pursued and achieved are primarily done for local consumption and need fulfillment. Unlike the highly developed and complex economy of advanced societies, tribal economy is simple and hugely influenced by its cultural factors.

However, many of the different tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh are known for their respective specialized economic activities. For example, the Adi community is known for being expert cultivators and agriculturists, while their neighbours the Idu Mishmi community is known for being excellent weavers. This gave rise to the system of barter between these two communities, thereby these communities not only exchanged materials but also influenced each other’s culture to a certain extent. Likewise, the Memba economic life and activities is a reflection of their culture and environment to a certain level. Unlike most tribes of the state, the Memba follow both Slash and Burn or Jhum and Permanent type of cultivation. Agriculture is mainly done for local or self-consumption rather than for commercial purposes. Irrigation farming has also been adopted to a certain extent but the agricultural yield was used for commercial purposes. The vegetation and climate of
Menchuka Valley also provides for favourable rearing of domestic cattle’s and livestock. Livestock animals include the cow, pigs, Hen, Mithun, Ox, Sheep, Goats, Horse and Pony. The rearing of horse was significance to the community since it is used as a means of transportation during trade expeditions to far off lands like Tibet and other neighbouring Villages.

Hunting, fishing and gathering are other economic activities pursued by the Memba community. The forests areas that the tribe inhabits provides abundant of resources and forest products. It not only provides resources for local consumption like meat, fish and edible roots, leaves and fruits but also provides abundance of Bamboo and Timber. It is processed into various other products that help in generating new areas of economy contributing to a flourishing cottage industry. Iron Smelting, textile production and paper making are few other economic pursuits that classify the tribes from other tribal communities of the state. It is significant to note that the community have possessed this knowledge since the time of their ancestors and along the years developed their own indigenous methods and means for better production of such items for commercial purposes.

Many communities lie on the border regions of the State and engaged in trade activities not only within their area but also with those tribes across the border regions. The Memba trade had been the most important aspect of their economy. The community had been engaging in trade and its allied activities with not only tribes across the Tibetan border but also with its neighbours the Ramo, Tagins, Bokars and Pailibos. The Memba had controlled the trade monopoly of the region by taking advantage of their strategic location and friendly nature. The community had devised and discovered various trade routes to far lung areas. They developed an intelligent
system of weight and measurement. They also practiced a highly sophisticated system of barter trade and exchange within the community and also with its international neighbours. Whereby not only goods and services were exchanged but buying and selling of human slaves were also practiced.

However, the Memba community practiced a mix type of economy. Its economic structure is markedly different from that of the other tribal groups of the state but it is also difficult to find a simple definition of the type of economy followed. The people follow various types of occupations and economic activities to sustain themselves and have been continuously developing in the area by venturing into other fields of economy in recent years. Many of the community men and women have entered into white collar jobs with various governmental agencies and departments. Many, especially the youths have begun to be employed outside the districts and state by taking up employment with various Multinational Companies in metropolitan cities. The participation of women in the trade and business sector has increased to a great extent. They have begun to be actively involved in the economic scenario of the community and no longer consider it necessary to confine themselves to the domestic sphere or agricultural fields. The borders of the economic sphere have begun to transcend across the village, district and state lines.

Mankind has experienced certain things that were beyond the understanding or imagination of their mind. Especially in the early days, the cause of some natural calamities likes thunder, earthquake, and even the birth and death of a person was a mystery for them. This led them to generate a certain belief and faith in some supernatural power that they considered responsible for all the happenings on earth. It was therefore the duty of the man to please them in the form of practicing certain
rituals as per the belief. They have established a kind of close relationship between themselves and this power by adjusting themselves to it in two ways. The first by controlling or overpowering the spirit by enchanting or practicing some techniques and channelising the power for good or bad. The second, by offering puja or worship to propitiate the superhuman power for acquisition of the thing or the object desired. Thus, Memba form a certain type of belief system that act as a guiding factor in the religious life. Same goes in case of the Memba Community. The Memba are the followers of the Buddhism, but before the embarrassment of Buddhism, the Bon was the dominant religion. Though it is not in practice today but some of its elements like their belief on the local deity and demons is visible in their religious practices. According to the legend of the Memba, the root of spread of Buddhism among the Memba is credited to Guru Padmasambhava, a lotus born, also the founder of Tibetan Buddhism.

The birth place of Buddhism is India, from here it spread to different parts of the world. It is interesting to note that Buddhism in Menchuka Valley was borrowed from Tibet. The Tibetan form of Buddhism is divided into five main sects based on their teaching, doctrine and practice. They are Kah-dam-pa, Ge-lu-pa, Kar-gyu-pa, Sa-kyat-pa and Nying-ma-pa. The Memba are the followers of the Nying-ma-pa sect of Buddhism. This sect is closely associated with the tantric type of religion.

The lives of Memba revolve round the religion. The day starts with the religious activities. Most of the time elderly people is seen holding mane and rosary and keep on chanting the hymn “Om mane Padme hum.” They are one of the most peace loving tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. This peace loving nature was the impact of Buddhism. Their belief in the doctrine and teaching of the Buddha, its simplicity and
use of easy ethical code has great impact on the lives of the people. Therefore, the institution of the lama (monk) plays a very important role in the day-to-day affairs of the people, which they inherited in recent past. Lamas are considered to be a teacher who guides the common men towards enlightenment. Moreover, the tradition of sending the eldest son born in a Memba family to become a lama itself depicts the importance of a lama in the lives of the Memba society, though this practice is declining with each passing day. However, there is no restriction of one becoming a lama. The presence of lama is required in every walk of a Memba life, from a birth to the naming and making of kundali (birth chart) to the death a person. The role of lama is not limited to this only, they are required in every ceremonies, during hermitage and festivals to initiate the rituals.

Lamas are regulated by set of rules, which they are bound to follow like practicing meditation regularly, go for chams (hermitage, meditation) in regular interval. They also have their own administrative set up, which helps in ensuring discipline among themselves and to check the misuse of any tantric power (black magic) against someone. The institution of the Lama is bounded by the Cheoi-Tumh (rule and regulation) written in cheik manuscript. It contains lists of rules and regulations to be followed. One who breaks the rules are to face the consequences or punishment as prescribed according to types of offence.

Monastery also has important position in the religious life of the community. It is the main place of worship and every genre of people comes and offers prayer to their Gods. Usually monastery is located in isolated place some distance away from the village. However, the site for the construction of a Gomp is done be after seeing an oracle by the lamas, and then villagers contribute and helps in the construction.
The study reveals that Memba people themselves take part in the construction of the gomp, thereby reducing the expenses. This reflects the religious attitude of the community and their inclination towards it. The religious sphere of the community is incomplete without the mentioning the chorten (stupa), that serves as repository of relics, manuscripts, scared objects, where it is buried underneath. The mani, is again has a lots of significant in their religious life. Other important aspect that symbolise the religious status of people is the prayer flags, in which religious symbols are written and symbols drawn. Every Memba house is filled with the hanging of prayer flags. It found places hanging in gomps, mountains, routes, near bridge, it is believed that the prayers written in the flags helps in spreading the messages of Buddha to nook and corners of the world.

Another important component of Memba religion has been the practice of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is religious journey undertook by the believer to the holy site to homage to the God. Such holy places are termed Neh by the local people. There is no restriction in carrying out pilgrimage in Memba society. All the class of the people rich, poor, man, woman and children undertake pilgrimage at some point of their lifetime. Besides, the Memba celebrates various religious ceremonies and perform various rituals for the happiness and wellbeing of the people. They have their own pantheons that are blended with the local faith. It is significant to note that the fusion of few animistic characteristics being fused into Buddhism. It is witnessed in their rites and rituals. Thus, the religious practice has substantial influence on the social structure of the community. It is observed that Memba people live in harmony with each other. They are so occupied in their religious activities that there is no room for negative objects.
The existence and survival of Memba had a positive impact in building up an image of their own indigenous personality. Above all, it opposed alien domination and dictation after its integration in independent India. In order to protect its unity and integrity, Memba experienced a ruthless struggle in adverse circumstances and created memorable history. In the process, the Memba succeeded extremely well not only in glorifying the essence of their identity, but also gave new dimension to their quest for reviving the greatness of their historical past. The credit for their survival and existence rests entirely with Memba People of Menchuka. Some experts ascribe Monpa identity to Buddhism, but not convincingly enough. No doubt, Buddhism supported them, but the Memba though small in number gets full credit for adopting their own indigenous institutions and traditions. Despite all odds, the Memba mobilized widespread support of its own people. A unique phenomenon in the history will forever remain an inspiration to the communities struggling to protect their identity.